
Transportation Committee

ESB 5894

Brief Description: Authorizing the utilities and transportation commission to forbear from rate and service regulation of certain transportation services.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and Parlette.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Allows the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to exempt a transportation service, utilizing either motor vehicles or ferries, from regulation by the UTC if the service does not serve an essential transportation purpose, is solely for recreation, and does not effect operations of another UTC-regulated entity.
- Exempts passenger-carrying services provided pursuant to a contract with a state agency or funded by a grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation from UTC regulation.
- Requires the UTC to study the appropriateness of rate and service regulation of commercial ferries operating on Lake Chelan.

Hearing Date: 3/24/09

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315)

Background:

An auto transportation company is defined as a company that transports people between fixed termini or over a regular route on public highways for compensation, but does not operate exclusively within a city or town. A charter party carrier receives compensation to transport a group of persons who, pursuant to a common purpose and under a single contract, travel together as a group to a specified destination or for a particular itinerary. An excursion service carrier receives individually assessed fares to transport people from a city or town to elsewhere in the state and back to the point of origin, without picking up or dropping off passengers after leaving and before returning to the area of origin.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) is required to regulate the rates and service of auto transportation companies and commercial ferry service providers. In exchange for exclusive operating rights in a specified territory, an auto transportation company or commercial ferry service provider commits to both a level of service and a tariff. A change to either the level of service or the tariff must be reviewed by the UTC. The UTC also regulates the safety and insurance of charter party carriers, excursion service carriers, and auto transportation companies.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) administers grant programs to some service providers that meet the statutory definition of an auto transportation company. Certain state agencies also contract with auto transportation companies, or charter or excursion carriers, to provide service.

Summary of Bill:

The UTC may exempt a transportation service from the rate and service regulation applicable to auto transportation companies if the service does not serve an essential transportation purpose, is solely for recreation, and would not adversely affect the operations of a regulated auto transportation company. The company providing the service must obtain a permit under the passenger charter carriers chapter, and the UTC continues to regulate the company with respect to safety and insurance requirements.

The rate and service regulations applicable to auto transportation companies do not apply to a transportation service if the UTC finds that the service is pursuant to a contract with a state agency or a grant issued by Department of Transportation.

The UTC may exempt a commercial ferry service provider from rate and service regulation if the UTC finds, after an opportunity for any operator within the same territory to be heard, that the service does not serve an essential transportation service; is solely for recreation; and would not adversely affect the rates of services of an existing operator.

Clarification is added regarding the inapplicability of ride sharing benefits to a non-profit transportation provider that has a contract or grant with the WSDOT and is registered with the UTC, but does not serve special needs clients.

Within existing resources, the UTC is required to study the appropriateness of rate and service regulation of commercial ferries operating on Lake Chelan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.